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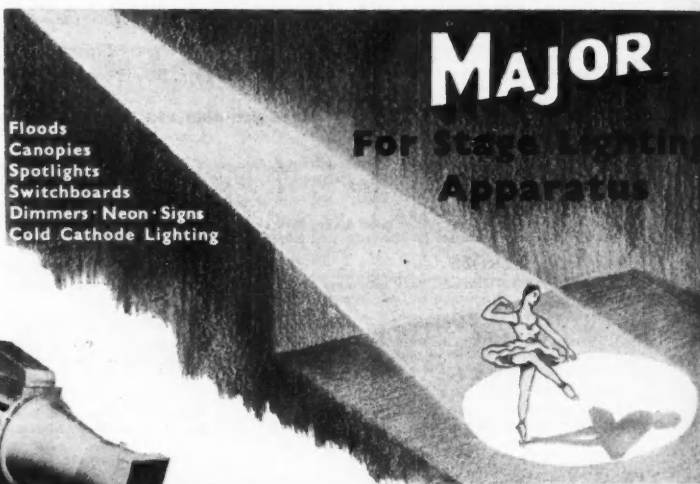
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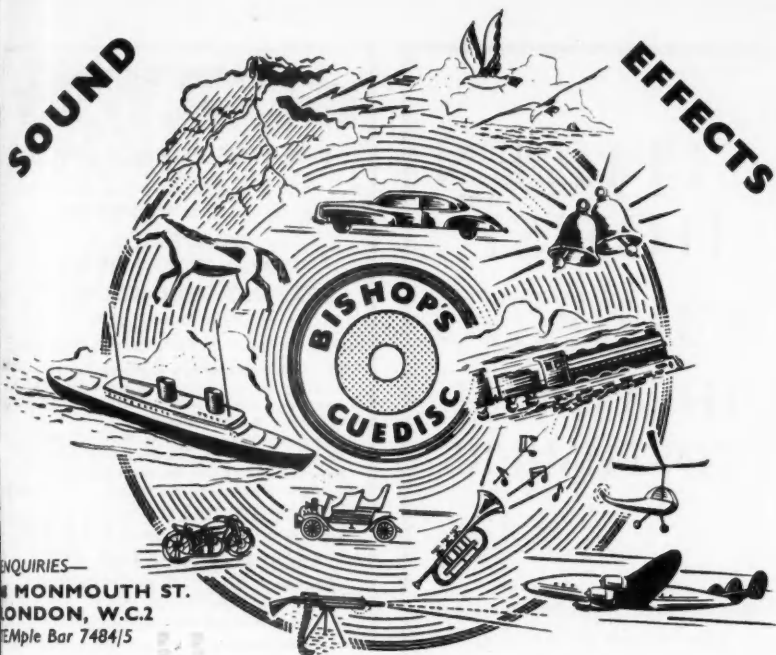
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# DRAMA

*The Quarterly Theatre Review*

NEW SERIES

SPRING 1954

NUMBER 32

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A BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE PUBLICATION



"A DAY BY THE SEA" at the Haymarket theatre. Sybil Thorndike, Megs Jenkins, and John Gielgud with Patricia Laurence and Peter Murphy. Photograph by Angus McBean.

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# Editorial

THE arts have come to be recognised as perhaps the best means of communication between peoples. Speaking an international language, music and the visual arts can find the common ground between races.

The theatre cannot so easily achieve this communication. Language, and therefore the language-barrier, is involved in it: and indeed, as the mechanical forms of theatre develop more and more on the visual side, words become the living theatre's most important medium of expression. Then, too, the material of the dramatist is the human character, and this is expressed in terms of customs and habits, the interest of which lies in their difference rather than in their sameness, so that a play will tend to show division and not unity among human beings. For this reason it may be easier to find a common basis in the more abstract arts than in this very concrete one.

Yet the theatre can in fact reveal more movingly than any of them the oneness of humankind. Just because it shows the differences, the prejudices, the divisions of men, its revelation of the common humanity that lies beneath them all is the more powerful. The difficulties of the task may be greater, but of its value there can be no question.

One of the chief difficulties is, of course, the economic. The cost of taking a company abroad is now gigantic, and the returns, even of successes, can seldom be commensurate with the investment. The risks of transplanting plays from country to country are aggravated by the shifting climate of opinion and by the difficulty of getting a true interpretation from actors foreign to the play. The commercial managements who battle against these risks deserve our gratitude for their enterprise, even while we may hope for the day when the greater contemporary works may be exchanged on a basis similar to that of the classical companies. None can measure the value in terms of international respect and friendship which has accrued to Britain from the tours of the Stratford-on-Avon, Sadler's Wells and Old Vic companies.

In the United States, these companies have an unchallenged reputation; there is indeed nothing in American theatre to compare with them. But the fate of modern British plays there is very uncertain. The differences in ways of thought between the two countries are naturally more evident in the contemporary commercial play than in the masterpiece which emphasises common human values, and mistakes in presentation can sometimes falsify a script. Taking all this into account we believe that more could be done to give a proper showing in each country of the most suitable plays of the other. This is by no means only a question of English plays being performed on Broadway. In the long run, the university and community theatres in the U.S.A. exercise an influence perhaps more powerful and certainly more widespread.

Each year a number of America's most promising young people come as Fulbright scholars to Britain, and a few—far too few—British students of the theatre are enabled to visit the States. The welcome given recently to the British Drama League's delegate by the American Educational Theatre Association suggests that a regular interchange service might be instituted between British and American theatre-folk.

# PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

By J. W. LAMBERT

OF the dozen or so new plays produced between the end of October and the middle of January only two have attempted to be anything out of the ordinary; and both, unfortunately, fell short of their target. The surprising thing about Peter Ustinov's new piece was not that it collapsed so disastrously but that it was ever put on. Mr. Ustinov is one of the most interesting figures in the British theatre; it may well be that his powers of self-criticism are not strong—so much the better if this means that all his energies are bent upon creation—but surely somebody might have persuaded him that it were better to scrap *No Sign of the Dove* and start again. It can never, to an objective eye, have seemed anything but an ill-conceived mixture of undergraduate romp, second-hand Shavianism and banal moralising. Once the decision to produce was taken, surely somebody must have suspected that a more naturally comic actress than Beatrix Lehmann was needed for the bejewelled, brother-worshipping poetess; a less drily acidulous player than Raymond Huntley for the overweening, self-satisfied, grossly precious brother; a more tremendous, instinctively patriarchal, ripely arrogant figure than Miles Malleon for the old man who alone foresaw the well-deserved doom of mankind, and would save from the flood only the girl named, with winsome symbolism, Hope? And once the rehearsals were under way might not somebody, without offence, have suggested to Mr. Ustinov, his own producer, that no play, however bad, is improved by being taken at a snail's pace? Evidently nobody did, and the result was catastrophic.

Clifford Odets' *The Big Knife* was written in 1949, but is essentially old-fashioned in the manner of the "socially-

conscious" literature of the thirties. Potentially an excellent melodrama, it fails as a play partly because it constantly relapses into crude sermons on the evils of power, money and Hollywood; partly because, at pains not to whitewash his central figure, a film star in the grip of his studio bosses, Mr. Odets goes to the other extreme, making him so egocentrically unpleasant that it is impossible to sympathise with him at all. Sam Wanamaker seems to excel at delineating nasty little men in a state of extreme tension; the film actor is very sharply etched. A dark and wiry bundle of nervous tics, he rocks back and forth across the stage in heel and toe jerks which keep us, as well as him, always on the hop; and each movement contributes something to the projection of character. As the great mogul of the studios, Frederick Valk thunders across a study of massive wickedness none the less impressive for being almost unintelligible. The outburst of false bonhomie between him and his recalcitrant star was one of the most chilling moments I have encountered in the theatre for some time.

I very much disliked the slick manipulation of self-pity in N. C. Hunter's play *Waters of the Moon*, despite its many opportunities for fine acting; his new piece, *A Day by the Sea*, seems to me quite charming. Mr. Hunter treads a placid Chekovian path with great skill in his tale of assorted disappointments, and once more gives his players splendid chances. Dame Sybil Thorndike, perhaps less richly served than she was in the earlier play, is entirely at home as the upper-class Englishwoman, alternately vague and sharp, and finely moving when, fluffing out her feathers, she gives way to a quick burst of maternal pride on behalf of the son she constantly chides. Sir



John Gielgud's diplomat is, in its straight-backed, earnest, priggishly diffident way, a perfect piece of comic acting; Sir Ralph Richardson's toping doctor, wise in the wisdom of the damned, turns aside with intallibly judged tenderness a poor plain girl's attempt to help him; and in a deck-chair duet these two men, the one all rigid, logical urbanity, the other all ragged, rubious, tired impatience, play together in a way which is itself an

*Holly and the Ivy* with another highly agreeable play; intelligent and thoughtful, though not to be examined too closely, *A Question of Fact* is neatly made and effectively dramatic in its unwinding of a young schoolmaster's attempt to find out the truth about his parentage. He does so only when his mother, herself in her self-confident prosperity a surprise, tells him in a fine set piece that his father, though a convicted murderer, was really only



PAUL SCOFIELD, PAMELA BROWN and HAROLD SCOTT in Wynyard Browne's new play "A Question of Fact" at the Piccadilly Theatre. Photograph by Angus McBean.

aesthetic joy to watch. Irene Worth goes from strength to strength; she draws a saddened woman in early middle age without the least hint of lugubriousness; and Sir Lewis Casson, as an old man longing to die, hands out, to anyone with the price of a ticket, a cheap lesson in the true art of character-acting.

Wynyard Browne has followed *The*

a charming chap gone wrong; and so sets his mind at rest. I don't myself find this at all convincing, but it provides Gladys Cooper with a big moment; she makes the most of it with brittle grace and great power of command. Paul Scofield as the schoolmaster is not extended, but gives the part all the uneasy, fractious, furrowed anxiety it demands. It seems to be

widely felt that Pamela Brown is miscast as his wife, that she is suitable only for the bizarre; but the part, though not prominent, is one of great importance to the balance of the play, and Miss Brown plays it with an extremely effective tactful humanity.

Correctly described as "an occasional fairy tale," Terence Rattigan's *The Sleeping Prince* was written for the time of the Coronation, but still makes an easy entertainment; it was rash, though, to change the mood halfway through the last act, and to give the end a gentle, dying fall which is not quite within Vivien Leigh's range; elsewhere her Mary Morgan, a dear little doll from the chorus of an Edwardian musical comedy, is wholly fetching. Sir Laurence Olivier, a bullet-headed, creaking Casanova, assumes a thick, carefully studied Central European accent, odd in a man said to have been to Eton, which makes it rather difficult to understand what he is saying and slows the proceedings down alarmingly. But there, actor-managers must be allowed their fun; and after all a foreign accent makes a change from a false nose. The triumph of the piece falls to Martita Hunt as a Grand Duchess, for whom Mr. Rattigan has, perhaps thoughtlessly, provided by far the best part: her account of a performance of *King Lear*, given by the nobility and gentry in the gardens of a Carpathian castle, is something to be treasured, an astounding vision of Mrs. Siddons in Wonderland.

Three pallid but well-meaning pieces: *The Return*, by Bridget Boland, in which Flora Robson brought her usual grave integrity to the part of a nun who renounced her vows, and which boasted an excellent first act; *The Orchard Walls*, in which Valerie White gave a masterful edge to a headmistress inclined to look indulgently upon young love; and *Down Came a Blackbird*, a rhinoplastic romp about a woman transformed by an operation from ugly duckling to swan (ornithology seems insistent), in which Betty

Paul's touching performance so delicately outlined the plight of the plain as to almost transform the play.

*Blind Man's Buff*, a very odd piece by Ernst Toller and Denis Johnston, resolved itself into a good second act surrounded by perfunctory rubbish. The trial of a doctor charged with murdering his wife was excellently done; like most trial scenes it involved a mildly comic but impressive judge, two counsel, one fussy and cross, the other plumply bland, and a broadly farcical witness from the lower orders. Agatha Christie's *Witness for the Prosecution* also includes all these, and curiously enough both plays make fun of a scientific witness—in each case a petulant pathologist. Mrs. Christie provides plenty of entertaining incident and a positive plethora of surprises just before the final curtain. Emlyn Williams's *Someone Waiting* puts a severe strain on the suspension of disbelief, offering in return a good deal of ingenuity and a moderate chill in the air. Mr. Williams himself has no difficulty, as a broken little failure out to avenge his son's wrongful hanging, in making us feel uneasy as he pads about, white-haired and dark-eyed, by turns sullen, smooth and nastily gleeful; but he strangely underplays his own climax, and it is left to Adrienne Allen, as a tycoon's compromised wife, to express real horror, freezing and dumbly shrivelling as she sits, when she learns who the man is she has taken into her home.

\* \* \*

Discussing, the other day, the relative durability of Shaw's plays, I was astonished to hear the view put forward that *Pygmalion* would be one of the first to go. There are at least three reasons why this should not be so: it has all the popular elements of the Cinderella story, complete with a possible happy ending; it has, in Mrs. Higgins's tea-party, one of the finest comic scenes in the English drama; and it has, in Eliza Doolittle, a part which actresses will always pant to play. This may be a

little hard on those whose husbands are required by circumstance to play Higgins, for it is almost impossible to make him both rude enough and adequately sympathetic. John Clements

girl whose elocution has outrun her vocabulary, and achieving a fine dignity. Athene Seyler makes surprisingly little of Mrs. Higgins, but Charles Victor's Doolittle is by now a



VIVIEN LEIGH and LAURENCE OLIVIER in "The Sleeping Prince" at the Phoenix Theatre. Photograph by Angus McBean.

at the St. James's has a brave try, relying for the most part on barking and waving his arms; Kay Hammond is an enchanting Eliza, never quite bringing her or the play out of the fairy-tale frame, using her own plummy huskiness to marvellous effect as the

minor classic in its own right, dry yet earthy, and never over-played; all in all this is an admirable revival, though I am deeply sorry that Mr. Laurence Irving has given away the secret of the rain in the opening scene—for if ever one's attention wandered (in the last

act, for instance) one could always speculate as to the means of that remarkable illusion.

But then we were not long ago sternly reminded that it is wicked to entertain illusions in the theatre. Certainly nobody was likely to have done so during Donald Wolfit's production of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. This revival should have been interesting, for Massinger's comedy was strangely in advance of its time, and the part of Overreach, in which Kean caused sophisticated persons to faint in droves, should have suited Mr. Wolfit; in fact, however, the performance in general was so bad, and Mr. Wolfit's in particular so spiritless, that it was hardly worth seeing even as a curiosity.

Almost equally disappointing, though on a rather higher level, was the scrappy Stratford production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Peggy Ashcroft played with fire (in more ways than one) but, although she spoke the verse beautifully as ever, her over-refined vowel-sounds here seemed particularly to tell against her. Michael Redgrave's Antony, a stirring and magnanimous creation, had one extraordinary shortcoming: despite grey hairs, he conveyed to me no sense of being an ageing man, spurred on at last only by desire. Both were handicapped by some extremely poor small-part playing—a general condemnation from which Harry Andrews alone escapes unblemished; his Enobarbus was a most noble figure, even in his wrongheaded and regretted desertion.

The Old Vic meanwhile goes its ways, steadily producing Shakespeare which is alive and kicking, never (so far) reaching the heights, but certainly not in disgrace. In George Devine's production, *King John*, a decidedly inferior play, emerged as dramatically effective despite all the ranting, and despite the oddity of battles in which soldiers dressed as spacemen dodged nippily round the all too permanent set. Fay Compton's Queen lamented with immense resource but, it must be

confessed, for what seemed a very long time. The lovely lines, prompted perhaps by the death of Shakespeare's own son, caused tears to flow when wailed by Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Siddons; admittedly theirs was a more lachrymose age, but my eyes remained obstinately dry. Richard Burton banged out a spirited Faulconbridge; Michael Hordern's King was altogether admirable, and the scene in which he breathed to Hubert his intentions towards the boy Arthur was quite horrifying. Wildly vacillating, boldly weak, cringing and defiant, he dominated the play as John never did England.

I wish I could feel as warmly towards his Malvolio; this is the work of an artist, but it seems to me overplayed in the manner of *Comédie française* Molière, the grimaces and gestures too inclined to self-caricature; most affecting when all that could be seen of him was a pair of white hands stretching up from his underground prison. Mr. Burton's Sir Toby was, perhaps, a little too restrained in the style of Cedric Hardwicke; but this is surely a fault on the right side, likely to get nearer the heart of the man than any amount of belching. For the rest Denis Carey's production of *Twelfth Night* was delightful to look at and at least adequately performed. Claire Bloom seems unable to embrace any sort of gaiety, and if only for that reason was not an ideal Viola; but Gwen Cherrill's Olivia, aloof yet alive, was a great relief after the ponderous playing this part usually gets. And Paul Daneman's Feste displayed an actor who can transmit feeling without a laborious display of mime; this clown, too, followed the Old Vic's 1949 revival in being a sad-eyed fellow, though less direfully neurotic than Robert Eddison's; and, singing with the right unprofessional tunefulness, he brought the play to a tender close in that twilight hush which is now almost obligatory in any production of Shakespearean comedy, and unfailingly beautiful.

# RUSSIAN THEATRE NOW

By JOHN FERNALD

*Mr. Fernald visited the U.S.S.R. in the Autumn of 1953  
and attended performances in Moscow and Leningrad.*

TO see half a score of Moscow and provincial productions hardly qualifies one to generalise about the Russian Theatre. But on this evidence its strength seems to lie not

The settings I saw were not exciting and were often crudely lit, though the opera and ballet, traditionally magnificent, can challenge comparison anywhere in the world. I was occasionally



"THE THREE SISTERS." From a photograph of the closing scene in the current Moscow Art Theatre production.

in its contemporary playwrights or in its directors and designers, but in the wealth of its tradition, the dramatic literature of its (quite recent) past, and the richness and profusion of its acting talent, not to mention the enthusiasm of an enormous public which fills every theatre everywhere seven nights a week, with a matinée on Sundays.

surprised by a sort of casualness in the work of the directors; an apparent lack of feeling for *nuance* of tempo, for evocative grouping, for taking charge of a scene and sweeping it up to a climax. But the acting—that was a different story! I have never known such a high all-round level of sheer acting talent as I saw everywhere

around me in that short time. And acting after all is what matters most, provided the plays are good.

I must pass over somewhat hastily the first night I spent in Moscow, when I saw an Offenbach operetta the badness of which was a complete mystery in the light of what was to come. This was disillusion indeed. Mediocre, realistic scenery straining to be vertical; strain, in fact, everywhere, particularly

*King Lear* by a Minsk company playing in Leningrad. Lear was acted by a great square man with a vibrant bass voice—physical attributes quite commonplace in Russia, magnificent for Shakespeare and only too rarely found here. I would say that his performance ranked with the very best of our time. But the Cordelia was even more exciting—an actress in her middle thirties, far too old to the English way



"UNCLE VANYA." Moscow Art Theatre production.

among the chorus, each of whom seemed to be saying "This isn't me really." By way of contrast the leading man was full of confidence; he looked like Siegfried dressed as Little Lord Fauntleroy and frequently had to make a hurried exit through a trapdoor. Only the orchestra was above English provincial standards; it played Offenbach without the slightest difficulty.

But apart from this, the standard of plays presented was high. There were at least three Shakespeare plays running and four by Tchekov; the names of Tolstoy, Gogol, Shaw, Dickens and Gorki dominated the playbills. I saw

of thinking, but rich in personality and experience. I have always wanted to see Cordelia played not as a juvenile, sweet and soft and vulnerable, but as a woman elemental in the power of her love, every whit as strong in her goodness as her sisters are strong in evil. I found this at last in Leningrad, and I found there, too, what I was to see everywhere else—a company with no "tail," where everyone seemed to have the same mastery over their job.

*Pygmalion* was on when I returned to Moscow. It was a refreshing production and most recognisably faithful to the author. All the usual laughs were there



including the delighted roars of laughter and applause for Eliza's famous exit line. Be it noted, Shaw's "toff" characters were not exaggerated but played with observant realism and integrity.

The word "integrity" comes constantly to mind when watching Russian acting. They don't yield to the temptation to over-play which comes from thinking too much of what the audience wants and too little of what the character is. This is because the teaching of Stanislavsky is at the very root of the Russian stage. His influence is not confined to the Moscow Art Theatre but lives everywhere in the drama schools, in the big theatres of Moscow and Leningrad and in the provincial repertory companies. "There is no other way but his," said the director of the Lunacharsky State Institute of Theatre when explaining his curriculum to me.

To see his way with Tchekov is to see it at its finest. In 1938 Nemirovitch Danchenko, Stanislavsky's lifelong friend and partner and himself a director of equal stature, produced *The Three Sisters*. That production with its original cast is still running in Moscow to-day, and to say that it was the most overwhelmingly beautiful thing I have ever seen in the theatre is to admit that I can't write well enough to express the extremes of my admiration. Here was everything I had ever wanted from a Tchekov production, a perfect blend of realism with theatrical effect such as only great acting, great direction and great writing can achieve. They don't say in Moscow "Let's go and see *The Three Sisters*", they say "Let's go and pay a visit to the three sisters;" and that's just how it is.

Danchenko died in 1940 but his production lives on, and the Russian theatre being what it is, there is every reason to suppose that it will last at least another decade. Already the cast are over fifteen years too old, but in Russia this could not matter less (Tchekov's wife, now in her seventies, was playing Madame Ranevsky until

five years ago and was still actively on the stage until last year).

In England the delicate balance of a Tchekov play often eludes us: we have been known to exploit the quirks and foibles of Tchekovian oddities to suit the exhibitionist desires of a particular actor, and to distil a meretricious "atmosphere" from a mournful counterpoint of tears and barking dogs. But humour is the keynote of the Russian productions—humour and courage in the face of despair. The "atmosphere" is there in full measure but only as a foil to the optimism which they seek and find in all his plays except *Ivanov*. (Significantly, *Ivanov* is seldom if ever performed.) Optimism may seem to us an odd quality to find in Tchekov, but personally I have never doubted that it was there. And when I saw those three sisters as the soldiers marched away, with tears on their cheeks but indomitable courage in their eyes, I was quite sure that Tchekov would have said that this was so.

He certainly would have been a happy man had he seen how widespread has become the style of acting which he loved. In *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, and in the other plays I saw, the actors have mastered the art of appearing to speak almost in confidence and yet be distinctly heard at the back of the gallery. True they are helped in this by two things. Most of their theatres are acoustically better than ours; they are not fan-shaped and designed to cram as many seats as possible into a restricted space, but have auditoriums small in proportion to the stage. And Russian audiences are quiet and attentive, finding it in no way necessary to smoke or eat during a performance which may take as long as four hours. Indeed, Russian audiences are as vividly exciting as Russian acting and as I finish these lines I have a memory of scores of "teenagers" in the Moscow Art Theatre crowding to the front of the stage at the fall of the curtain to toss roses to three middle-aged, rather plain, but very wonderful actresses.



# YOU WANT TO LISTEN TO THE OCEAN?

By WYNYARD BROWNE

PROFESSIONAL dramatists are often asked to read plays by acquaintances or total strangers who profess to want criticism and advice. John van Druten's book, *Playwright at Work*,\* is the letter we all ought to write when we send the plays back. But since it runs to 202 pages and we have, after all, our own work to do, the letter is never written. We extricate ourselves as best we can from an awkward situation by a mere inadequate page or two.

The situation is nearly always awkward because the plays are nearly always bad. One opens the big envelope each time with hope, with a flicker of excitement: but almost invariably, long before one has read to the end, it becomes clear that the play just will not do—at least, in anything like its present form. It needs radical replanning, drastic rewriting. And this is often the case even with plays by people of high intelligence who, in other branches of literature, have shown themselves to possess considerable talent.

Does this mean that play-writing is more difficult than any other form of writing? It would obviously be invidious for a playwright to say so. But at least it is undeniable that a play has to "work" in the theatre; and it has to work in two ways—as a machine for actors to act in and as a machine to keep audiences happy in their seats. And to write a play so that it will work in these two ways, while at the same time preserving and conveying intact the author's original imaginative insight, what Mr. van Druten calls his "sense of life," even if that was never very complex or profound, demands a high degree of technical skill.

The special nature and importance of technique in the theatre gives rise to a good deal of confusion in the judg-

ment and evaluation of plays. Which is the better play—a trivial and commonplace light comedy, written with great theatrical skill, which keeps large audiences happy for years on end, or a subtle and imaginative piece, the result perhaps of profound and original thought, so clumsily constructed or with such diffuse and ineffective dialogue that it folds up after a week or is perhaps booed off the stage and never revived? There is obviously no plain answer to this question: but it does suggest a useful reflection. The technically competent author of the light comedy may not be able to do much about improving the quality of his mind: but the subtle and imaginative author of the second piece can perfectly well do something about improving his technique. He might do a lot worse than start by reading Mr. van Druten.

*Playwright at Work* is a most comprehensive and valuable collection of tips, hints and warnings for those who want to become playwrights. It would certainly have saved me a great deal of time and trouble if I had been able to read it before I began to write my first play. (Another book, of a similar sort, which I did, in fact, find extremely useful at that time, and memories of which I still often find most salutary, is C. K. Munro's *Watching a Play*, now, I believe, out of print.) I read Mr. van Druten's book with that eager curiosity with which one reads any account of his methods of work by a distinguished practitioner of one's own craft. There is scarcely a sentence in it which I have not already found in practice to be true; and yet, in spite of this almost continuous agreement, I was left, in the end, feeling strangely depressed. So, I think, was Mr. van Druten himself. With an almost audible sigh, he starts his final chapter: "I have finished.

\* Hamish Hamilton. 12s. 6d.

have passed on all I know. And it seems to me that I have left a large hole in the middle. . . ." Exactly. Where, one feels, in all this talk of swift exposition, strong second-act curtains, willingness to sacrifice laughs, is *Hamlet*? Where *Uncle Vanya*? Where, even, *Young Woodley*? Not here, not here.

Technique, for all its importance, does not create the play. Technique is simply the strait gate through which any play must pass if it is to reach—well, not eternal life, as Mr. van Druten continually reminds us, but even an ephemeral life upon the stage. Imagination creates the play; and the problem confronting the playwright is how to squeeze it through the gate of technique without damaging it—without oversimplifying, conventionalising, vulgarising or falsifying it in some way, so that when it comes out on the other side, it is left, perhaps, if he is lucky, with a commercial success on his hands but not quite the play he meant. "That is not what I meant at all. That is not it at all." I have often wondered whether Mr. Eliot feels inclined to quote that line from *Prufrock* about his own plays. I certainly do about mine.

This sense of disappointment, of failure, every time a work is completed, has one great value. It makes you want to try again. It gives the impetus to start the next one. It is also, no doubt, why writers are continually trying to widen the gate of technique so as to let through more of their original intention or vision. Although Mr. van Druten's tips and hints are mostly concerned with the conventionally efficient, three-act, naturalistic play, it is noticeable that the contemporary play he describes with most enthusiasm and hope is one of a rather different sort which, he says of himself, "broke a number of rules and did a number of things all wrong, some even quite badly"—Carson McCullers' *A Member of the Wedding*. Moreover, in his own recent play, *I Am a Camera*, which is one of the more exciting events we are promised in the London theatre this year, he himself breaks rules, both

intentionally and unintentionally, and does things which he would "not have done before or even known how to do, because no one else had done them or even sketched them to show that they were possible or desirable." He is acutely conscious of the tension between technique and vision. For all his insistence that plays must enter into dramatic life through the strait gate of technique, he is exceedingly anxious to widen the gate.

Instinctively I would agree: but a doubt occurs to me. Is this pinning of faith to technical innovations itself a technician's error? Does this passionate desire to break rules spring from an over-estimation of the importance of rules or a superstition about their nature? It is worth noticing that the quotation from *A Member of the Wedding* which calls forth from Mr. van Druten the highest words of praise and enthusiasm is an example of highly skilful technique, of obedience, not disobedience, to one of the big, conventional, despised rules, that of the "click" curtain.

Tragedy has broken loose in the household, and Berenice, the colored cook, is sitting trembling at the thought of what may be happening off stage at that moment. With her is the small child, John Henry. The lights have gone out in a thunder storm, and the stage is lit by a candle only.

JOHN HENRY: I'm scared. Where's Honey?

BERENICE: Jesus knows. I'm scared, too. With Honey snow-crazy, and loose like this—and Frankie run off with her Papa's pistol, I feel like every nerve has been picked out of me.

JOHN HENRY (holding out his sea-shell, and stroking Berenice): You want to listen to the ocean?

The real source of all that Mr. van Druten so much admires in *A Member of the Wedding* is that "hole in the middle" where Miss McCullers' creative imagination works; and I am sure that he is right when he suggests, in what is probably the most important sentence in his whole book, that "real wonder, an awareness of standing among great mysteries, is the clue to

the plays which have truly moved us."

What rules there may be for preserving and sharpening a dramatist's apprehension of the continual and astonishing mysteries of life and the world, no one can tell. They may have more to do with religion than with the technique of playwriting: but that itself is a most dangerous thought. For imagination bloweth where it listeth, not where theologians and the devout would have it blow. Yet it is the apprehension of mystery which is the

source of every play we value, just as it is the source of every good joke. The dramatist is like John Henry. In a world where many people are snow-crazy with politics and fear, and others have run off with Papa's atom-bomb, and ordinary men and women often feel as if every nerve has been picked out of them, he beckons them in off Broadway or Shaftesbury Avenue, holds out his sea-shell and suggests, stroking them with his very best technique, "You want to listen to the ocean?"

## O'NEILL AND HIS PLAYS

By ALLAN WADE

THE death of Eugene O'Neill a few months ago revives our interest in the long succession of plays which he gave the American stage between the twenties and early thirties of this century. After 1934 persistent ill-health kept him from the theatre, though he continued to write voluminously, and within the last half-dozen years published two late plays, one of them, *The Iceman Cometh*, produced successfully in New York, neither of them played in England.

O'Neill's youth was hard and adventurous. Son of a well-known Irish-American actor, after a year at Princeton University he tried various business jobs, made several voyages as an ordinary seaman, tried acting, prospecting and work on a newspaper, until a breakdown in health condemned him to six months in a sanatorium. Most of these varied occupations provided him with the material on which his earliest plays were founded. These are all strictly realistic. A succession of one-act plays gave vivid if depressing pictures of life aboard small ships or in port. O'Neill's characters are mainly brutal and greatly addicted to violence; mirth is unknown to them and their chief solace is drink.

It was with a couple of these short plays, *In the Zone* and *Ile*, that London playgoers first made O'Neill's acquaintance, and I can remember the excitement of feeling that a new and possibly important dramatist had been discovered. These plays were followed by a production of *Diff'rent*, that painful study of sexual frustration; and a little later C. B. Cochran brought an American company to London in *Anna Christie*, and then staged O'Neill's early masterpiece *The Emperor Jones*. Although none of these productions lasted long, we had seen enough to be able to appreciate O'Neill's sure sense of the theatre and to admire his bold experiments in stage-craft; but, as an astute American critic pointed out long ago, it is his "theatre" that is interesting rather than his drama. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the fact that almost every character in the earlier plays is of a low order of intelligence. Some of them are monomaniacs, like the sea-captain in *Ile* who faces mutiny and finally allows his wife to go mad with fear and loneliness rather than return to port without a full shipload of whale-oil; or like that other captain in *Gold* with his lust for what he mistakenly believes is buried treasure;

as it or like Anna Christie's sailor father  
The who, hating the sea and all who have  
world to do with it, sends his daughter to a  
crazy miserable life inland where she is slave-

only in proportion as they feel their  
respective situations." But "there are  
degrees of feeling—the muffled, the  
faint, the just sufficient, the barely



"MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA" at the Westminster Theatre, 1937.  
Laura Cowie as Christine Mannon and Beatrix Lehmann as her daughter Lavinia.

driven by her relatives, seduced by one  
of them, and enters a brothel as a means  
of escape. Henry James, in one of his  
invaluable prefaces, pointed out that  
"the agents in any drama are interesting

intelligent . . . and the acute, the  
intense, the complete—the power to be  
finely aware—as Hamlet and Lear are  
finely aware. Our curiosity and our  
sympathy care comparatively little for



"DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS" produced by Henry Cass at the Westminster Theatre in 1940. The cast included Stephen Murray as Eben Cabot and Beatrix Lehmann as Abbie Putnam.

what happens to the stupid, the coarse and the blind." One searches the earlier plays in vain for any character who could be described as finely aware. They suffer, but their suffering is almost that of animals; rage makes them often inarticulate and they are driven by it to violence or despair.

O'Neill's first inspiration to write plays is said to have come from seeing performances by the Abbey Theatre Company on one of their American tours. The influence of Synge is perhaps apparent here and there, and certainly the Irish stoker Matt, in *Anna Christie*, speaks what one might call the Synge dialect, though without the subtlety of Synge's rhythm. A stronger and more lasting influence seems to be that of Strindberg; to this we may trace both O'Neill's continuous desire of formal experiment, and possibly also his determined pessimistic attitude to life,

though that may also have been largely temperamental.

After *The Emperor Jones*, in which O'Neill's powerful theatre-sense carried him successfully through what is practically a monologue depicting the growing fear of the ex-Pullman porter turned "Emperor," trying to escape from his revolted subjects through the forest at night, driven to desperation by the insistent beat of the tom-toms as the chase closes in on him and he is finally shot—with silver bullets, O'Neill produced several plays of lesser importance, and then, in 1922, broke new ground with *The Hairy Ape*. Again we find, in the stoker Yank, an intelligence only a little above that of his prototype the gorilla, which finally crushes him to death. Having persuaded himself that his labour supports the whole world, like some primitive Atlas, he is suddenly driven to fury by the mistaken

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idea that a millionaire's daughter, visiting the stokehold, has jeered at him as "a hairy ape," though actually she has fainted on being confronted with so much brute force. The rest of the play shows Yank trying, in vain, to discover some way of wreaking vengeance on society. Suddenly, after a realistic opening, O'Neill takes us into scenes of "expressionist" drama; the stoker's mates speak in chorus on a single note; there is a scene, which must present difficulties in presentation, where Yank encounters a "church parade" on Fifth Avenue, a procession of well-dressed men and women who are so many dummies. How successful this mingling of styles proved I do not know; O'Neill did not repeat his experiment but returned to almost pure realism in his next three plays: *Welded*, a somewhat inconclusive study of an oddly hysterical couple, interesting because it contains passages of dialogue spoken by the husband and wife in each other's presence but not addressed to each other, foreshadowing the experiment O'Neill developed later in *Strange Interlude*; *All God's Chillun*, a pathetic story of a marriage between black and white; and *Desire Under the Elms*, a powerful presentation of life, in sordid conditions on a New England farm, in which land-greed leads to lust, adultery, and child murder.

*The Fountain* which followed in 1925 was O'Neill's first venture in semi-historical drama. This story of Ponce de Leon and his search for the Fountain of Youth is in eleven scenes and requires, as do his later historical plays, very elaborate settings. It failed in America and has not, apparently, been played in England. Next O'Neill produced what is perhaps the most puzzling of his plays, *The Great God Brown*, in which he made continuous use of masks for his leading characters, masks which they put off and on as the dialogue reflected their real or their assumed personalities. Brown is the successful business man, Dion his friend, the dreamy, irresponsible but highly

gifted architect whom he employs in his business. Both love the same girl, Margaret; she marries Dion. When Dion dies, of dissipation and despair, Brown assumes his mask and is able to pass himself off on Margaret as her husband and the father of Dion's sons. There is also a character named Cybel, a woman kept by Brown, in whom we are supposed to recognise the earth-goddess Cybele. The symbolism of the play is by no means easy to follow, and O'Neill's statement of his intentions, that his "background of conflicting tides in the soul of Man should always be mystically within and behind them, giving them a significance beyond themselves" does not provide much illumination.

After a pause of two years four more plays appeared. In *'Marco Millions'* O'Neill seems for the time to have reached calmer waters. The play is a not unkindly satire on the modern business man who thinks only of making money. Personified in Marco Polo, he is contrasted with the serene wisdom of the East, in the persons of Kublai Kaan and the Chinese sage Chu-Yin. And in the pathetic figure of Princess Kukachin, the Great Kaan's granddaughter who loves Marco while he remains blandly unconscious of her love, we feel, for the first time in O'Neill, a touch of beauty, almost a sense of poetry.

Next came a further experiment, *Strange Interlude*, the play which established O'Neill, for the time being, as a popular dramatist. Written in no less than nine acts, it reverted to the early nineteenth century convention of the "aside," in which the characters reveal their inmost thoughts to the audience, generally before addressing the characters on the stage, and so differing from the soliloquy spoken when a character is alone. This novelty which was no novelty evidently appealed to American audiences; presented by the Theatre Guild the play ran for more than eighteen months in New York. When Mr. Gilbert Miller



brought it to London with a mainly American cast it was respectfully treated by the critics, who nevertheless pointed out that the characters were not so much human beings as animated Freudian case-histories; but the play's run did not exceed a few weeks.

If one considers, as is possible, that the "aside" was merely a clumsy device employed by authors without sufficient skill to make their intentions clear to an audience otherwise, and observes its gradual disappearance from dramatic literature as the modern realistic playwright perfected his stage-craft, it may be wondered what was gained by this archaic revival. Actually very little seems to have been gained. If the play be read with the "asides" omitted, it will be found that little is lost; adroit acting could convey to a reasonably intelligent audience practically nine-tenths of what O'Neill prints in small type for his characters to deliver *sotto voce*.

In spite of the play's success in America O'Neill only repeated this particular experiment once again, in a shorter play *Dynamo*, produced without much success in 1929. An even more elaborate use of masks is made in the fourth play of this group, *Lazarus Laughed*, where almost the whole of a very large cast is masked, showing seven periods of life, from boy- or girlhood to old age, and seven types of character. One is hardly surprised to learn that the play was not produced professionally.

*Dynamo* was intended to form part of a trilogy, but after its production O'Neill abandoned work on the other two and devoted himself to another trilogy, the successful and interesting *Mourning Becomes Electra* of 1931. Although described as a trilogy this is really one long play in thirteen acts; it would hardly be possible to perform any one of the three parts as a self-contained unity. Here, however, is a considerable advance in dramatic method from *Strange Interlude*. What

theories it exemplifies are now implicit in the story, not served up to the audience in a series of "asides." In transferring the plot of the *Oresteia* to an American setting at the end of the Civil War, O'Neill has invented a strong melodramatic history of the doomed family of the Mannons, written realistically and giving his actors, and more particularly his actresses, occasion for a fine display of histrionics. Although the stage directions carefully prescribe that all the principal characters' faces resemble masks, it is unlikely that this instruction was, or could be, strictly obeyed.

We encounter a mellowed O'Neill in his next play *Ah, Wilderness*. Set in a small New England town such as he had already depicted in *Dynamo* and elsewhere, it treats almost idyllically a boy's love affair with a neighbour's daughter, he being under the influence of the *Rubaiyat*, Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*, and the early Shaw plays. Even a little humour, though of a somewhat primitive kind, has crept in, chiefly about the antics of a bibulous uncle.

In *Days without End* of 1934, of which some performances were given here O'Neill attempted a sort of Jekyll and Hyde theme, the hero John being accompanied always by a replica of himself wearing a mask—"the death mask of a John who has died with a sneer of scornful mockery on his lips." This second personality is supposed to be invisible to the other characters in the play; when Hyde speaks they assume the voice to be that of Jekyll. John, happily married, has committed a single act of adultery with a friend of his wife's whose husband ill-treats her. Neither has enjoyed the experience—there are few joyous liaisons in O'Neill's plays—and he is anxious to keep the secret from his wife, who is recovering from influenza. It is here, for once, that O'Neill's stage-craft has faltered. John, a business man, is writing a novel, actually based on his own experience. By the artificial and time-worn expedient of making him



recount the plot of his book the secret is revealed to his wife, who promptly rushes out into the night and develops pneumonia. The fear of losing her drives John to the foot of the cross in a nearby church, where his Hyde double falls dead. It all seems incredibly

much of his dialogue appears. And experimentalism in the theatre has a way of being quickly outmoded, as newer experiments succeed. One cannot, of course, feel certain what direction his talent might have taken had not illness intervened. During his



"MARCO MILLIONS," a scene from the Westminster Theatre production (1938) showing Griffith Jones as Marco Polo and Rosanna Seaborn as the Princess Kukachin. This play and "Mourning Becomes Electra" (1937) were produced by Michael MacOwan. The photographs illustrating this article were taken by Angus McBean.

naive and entirely unconvincing.

Re-perusal lately of nearly all O'Neill's plays raises a doubt if many of them will survive. His writing seems to me to lack that essential preservative, style. Unless he is using dialect, it is remarkable how flat and commonplace

retirement he is reported to have written many plays, and his latest work is not to see the light for a period of years. Perhaps playgoers of the twenty-first century—should any survive then—may welcome a masterpiece in O'Neill's ripest manner.

# YOU'RE WELCOME . . .

By HENZIE BROWNE

An account of a Drama Convention held in New York in December, 1953, to which the Writer was welcomed as the British Drama League's delegate.

THE Statler Hotel is conveniently located downtown across from the Pennsylvania Station, and here the Speech and Dramatic Art 1953 Conference was held; also S.A.A., A.E.T.A., N.U.E.A., A.F.A., and N.S.S.C.\* met for their council and committee meetings and presented their programmes. There were round table discussions, staff meetings and alumni breakfasts, luncheons and teas. I am easily impressed; for four days I was interested, stimulated and exhausted as well.

The Statler is immense, and appeared to be more than a hotel. In its Christmas dress it had a gala appearance which lightened what must usually be a most purposeful air. The street level is like a great enclosed piazza. Its sides are lined with bureaux far more extensive than one sees in an English hotel, banks, post offices, Information Center, flower shops, drugstore, gift shop, kiosks for porters, little blouse and lingerie shops and men's shops. Exits to Penn Station, 7th Avenue and 33rd Street, all have their individual traffic and preoccupations. A balcony on the mezzanine floor was hung with Christmas wreaths tied with scarlet bows—festive lifebelts in this static ship. For mainmast there stood in the centre a glittering frosted Christmas tree, its branches so thickly hung with coloured balls that the whole vast tree seemed to be made of spangles. It revolved continuously all day while coloured lights of crimson, blue, green and gold

played on it in turn. Under the general roar of voices, footsteps, bells and elevators, a remote record played carols—a thin reminder of the significance of the season.

Well, what part was I, the only foreign delegate, to play? In this field of Speech and Drama one meets almost universally a warm interest and a welcome. The publishing firm of Theatre Arts Books had a stall on the mezzanine floor, which was set out like a bazaar on all four sides of the balcony. Its directors, Rosamond Gilder and Robert MacGregor, generously shared their table surface, which had as cover and apron a white sheet, and beneath the sign "Theatre Arts Books" was displayed in equally splendid type "The British Drama League." Here I posted myself for seven hours each day, except when I attended a session or snatched a meal at the drugstore. My partner at the table always kept an eye on my literature and interests in my absence and I returned the courtesy.

It was announced at one meeting, but not with sufficient clarity, that I was there and what I was representing. The news got round and gradually people found their way to me. I had many happy reunions with friends and acquaintances from the days when we lived and worked in the U.S.A. Many members of the faculty and student body of "Carnegie Tech.," Pittsburgh, hailed me across a gap of twenty-three years. I was surprised that I was not asked more about English activities, such as summer schools and courses. The magazine (DRAMA) was the main attraction and many of my visitors became subscribers. I believe there will be many more American callers at 9 Fitzroy Square now, and I repeatedly

\* Speech Association of America, American Educational Theatre Association, National University Extension Association, American Forensic Association, National Society for the Study of Communication.

heard of the wonderful welcome and service which they had received at Headquarters in the past.

But I found my visitors were as keen to tell me of their activities as of their needs. This burning need to unburden, to pass on the load of experience to a stranger, is a most moving characteristic of humankind. The first visitor I had was an elderly free-lance journalist. He paused at my table, told me about his wife's major operation and said that despite the doctor's verdict they both believed she would recover; she had cooked his Christmas dinner. My second visitor's attack was direct: "Are you a Catholic?" "Only in the Episcopalian sense of the word," I replied. But for the most part it was the story, familiar even in Britain but far more frequent in this much larger country, of the drama teacher lonely and cut off from seeing plays or meeting theatre people.

The unsuitability of Broadway plays for university stages was discussed in a session on "The New Play" and a plea was made that colleges should look for new ones. Arthur Miller, author of *Death of a Salesman*, said the apprentice-playwright can only learn his art "at the moment of perfection." His wise talk was punctuated by wisecracks. "The lighter drama is concerned with who goes to bed with whom; the more serious with who *did* go to bed with whom." Professor Barnard Hewitt, of Illinois, President of A.E.T.A. for this year, commended the colleges, which he said were producing more plays than the professional theatre, but he felt there was a need for a central agency to supply and distribute manuscripts.

At a meeting on the basic problems of the graduate and professional programme, B. Iden Payne gave, as one would expect, a most distinguished talk on the balance between the technical subject and the liberal arts. He referred to the Drama Department at Bristol, to the exploration of the whole matter by the University of Oxford, and to the 1951 Symposium at Bristol, and asked

again the fundamental question "Was the University a seat of learning for its own sake or for vocational training?"

A challenging twenty minutes' worth came from the theatre-designer Charles Elson, pointing out that to-day's Broadway personnel were the students of yesterday. He said that to get better quality there they must train the students to a higher level and choose with care those whom they would encourage to make the theatre a life-work. Enumerating the necessary characteristics, he began with *Idealism*; the people of the theatre must remain artists all their lives and must not expect the regular and comfortable routine of ordinary citizens ever to be their lot. *Integrity* needs discovering in the character of the student, and Mr. Elson found the only satisfactory way was to work alongside the student, through the night if necessary, cutting out the social side when a project was in hand. *Initiative* was to be cultivated by giving a piece of work presenting problems to be overcome, to be achieved alone, without help or advice, and completed within a certain number of hours.

Finally, and to my mind debatably, Mr. Elson affirmed that as the spirit of *Aggression* always got there anyway, it was essential to give the other values to those who possessed it. Speaking to him afterwards, I tried to suggest that *Vitality* was aggression in spiritual and therefore higher terms, but he remained convinced of his assertion.

In this vast hotel, with special elevators for special floors, one reached the Keystone Room by the Ball Room elevator, but in seeking Penn Top South one well might arrive late by way of Penn Top North. I certainly arrived at my wrong destination when I heard very clearly announced through a microphone "All art is damnable." As I fled in the opposite direction, I never discovered whether this was a puritanical indictment or an exercise in diction.

It was difficult to decide whether

I should go to meetings or remain Casabianca-wise at my stall. The heat at the meetings was more intense than on the mezzanine floor, though the noise there was greater. But my book-stall (always needing tidying), the revolving tree, and the general activity above the canned echoes of "Adeste Fideles" seemed like home after three days.

But I must say a word about a fascinating session headed "More Theatre for More People." We heard how professionals and non-professionals can come together for the advancement of the Theatre. There were some remarkable personalities here—Willard Swire, who has just moved from Actors' Equity to A.N.T.A., told of the flexibility which has developed. There is no "closed shop" policy and for the last four years professional actors have been able to accept engagements in university and college productions. This two-way traffic is controlled by a careful table of percentage of Equity and non-Equity membership. It was a great pleasure and privilege to hear Laurence Langner, a creator of the full and good life even beyond the theatre of which he is one of the leaders. He told of the plans for a Stratford on the Housatonic River, which would have its Festival like the other two Stratfords, on Avon and in Ontario. This would be the home of Shakespeare in the U.S.A. under the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre and Academy. The cultivation of good speech he felt was a very urgent matter, for people were becoming so unintelligible to each other that the secret of communication might be lost.

In 1954 the Convention will be held in Chicago and in 1955 in Los Angeles. These may be too costly for a British delegate to attend, but not too far away, for distance has vanished into air-travel and the differences between our peoples are but variations on the common theme: "How shall we take the next step to advance the quality of our theatre?"

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# Theatre Bookshelf

## State Sponsored Drama

OFF-STAGE by Charles Landstone. Elek. 18s.

On the title page of this book Charles Landstone describes it as "A Personal Record of the first twelve years of State Sponsored Drama in Great Britain." It is an accurate description, for what makes this book so interesting is its combination of valuable factual information and highly personal comment. As Associate Drama Director of the Arts Council, Landstone was able to advise but not to command, and often he had loyalty to implement schemes of which he disapproved. He does not blame the Drama Directors under whom he served for what he considers to have been mistaken policies. Too often the Council overruled the Drama Director—and for this Landstone blames Lord Keynes, whom he describes as having "the amateur's calm assumption that he knows much better than the professional."

Landstone urged that the Council's aid should be distributed as widely as possible over the whole country: Keynes considered that their most important task was to set the highest possible standard in the West End theatre. Because he "loved glamour and success and was not impervious to flattery" he was easily persuaded by the most able and persuasive of the West End managers to endorse a policy which resulted in a single management being able to monopolise the services of the majority of our best players and playwrights, together with many of our best playhouses. One of the reasons why the Paris theatre has infinitely greater variety than our own is because there are no monopolist managements but a large number of small managements who express their own intensely individual tastes in their choice of plays and methods of presentation.

The two ever-recurring themes of this book are Landstone's exasperation at the Council's failure to accept

professional advice, and the frustration of his attempts to induce the Council to take more interest in the smaller repertories and the fit-up companies touring the provinces. He considers that the Drama Department functioned most satisfactorily when the Executive was the Drama Panel—"five or six public-spirited theatre people, giving their services free for the welfare of the theatre whose problems they understood so well." But in 1945 Keynes handed most of the powers of the Drama Panel over to a committee "of which only a minority had any understanding of theatre problems." As for the Council's attitude towards the small provincial companies, Landstone attributes that to a craving for immediate and spectacular results. "Solely taken up with what we termed 'Tenentry' and 'Old Vickery,' they have never really regarded the work in the provinces as anything but window-dressing."

This is an angry book but it is never bad-tempered. In spite of being outspokenly critical of some aspects of the Arts Council's work in the theatre it is in no sense an attack on the Arts Council. It is too personal a record to be regarded as a cool and considered judgment of the Arts Council's work, but it is one of the most important contributions to theatrical history in recent years, besides being lively, amusing, controversial, and altogether immensely readable.

NORMAN MARSHALL

## The Ballet

THE DIAGHILEV BALLETS, by S.L. Grigoriev. Trans. Vera Bowen. Constable. 35s.

PREPARATION FOR BALLETS, by N. Nicolaeva-Legat. Duckworth. 15s.

AN ANATOMY OF BALLETS, by Fernau Hall. Andrew Melrose. 30s.

No one is better qualified to speak of the Diaghilev Ballet than Serge Grigoriev—"the Papa Grigoriev" to



ELAINE FIFIELD and DAVID POOLE in "Pineapple Poll"; an illustration from Fernau Hall's *An Anatomy of Ballet*. Photograph by Roger Wood.

three generations of dancers; and to an earlier generation of balletgoers the genial bearded Russian giant who brings his family to the toyshop in *La Boutique Fantasque*.

Grigoriev was *régisseeur* to the Diaghilev Ballet from its inception in 1909 to its untimely end, with Diaghilev's death, in 1929. In his book, which Mrs. Bowen has carefully and, to the best of my knowledge, faithfully translated, Grigoriev chronicles the triumphs and disasters of the company during the twenty years in which it changed the ballet of Western Europe from a turgid after-dinner entertainment to a high theatre art.

With the help of his diaries and some old notebooks the author tells the tale of these significant years without recourse to what I beg leave to term the Anecdote Funny ha! ha! Soberly, dispassionately, he takes the reader from

Imperial Russia to Paris, London, Vienna, Barcelona, Berlin and the Americas; from the frenzy of some artistic success to the frenzy of some raucous failure; through the recurring financial chaos that invariably attends on any ballet enterprise to the inevitable financial crisis to which it has been pointing; from Opera House to Music Hall and back again to Opera House, with daring new ballets that have now become classics. And the author, neither extenuating nor reviling, is content to state the fantastic facts and leave them to speak for themselves.

Diaghilev was a great amateur of the opera and, above all, of the ballet. Unable himself to create ballet—to compose music, or choreograph dance movement, or design *décor*—he was wise enough to recognise this fact and to turn his limitations to advantage by gathering around him a team of

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brilliant creators and dancers to carry out his daring ideas. He became the most inspired impresario the world has ever known, and many of the ballets in his repertoire are given by every company in the world.

To Diaghilev and his collaborators perfection came first and solvency only a great deal later, if at all. And one of the most striking passages of the book shows the hard-pressed impresario cutting out a portion of the drop-cloth painted by Picasso for *Le Tricorne*, which he firmly intended to sell.

"I was sad," Grigoriev writes, "at parting with the curtain, which I loved, and said I feared we might be criticised for presenting the ballet without it." Diaghilev laughed. "Oh, in that case we'd say we were afraid it might get spoilt if we went on using it, so we'd put it away. No, I must sell it . . . I'll do the actual cutting out myself."

Diaghilev would have sold Picasso's *rideau* to *Parade* in the same way, but the design covered the whole extent of the false proscenium arch and no one wished to acquire so vast a work of art.

But strangely enough, in all the noting down of works, dates and journeys, the figure that emerges is not so much that of the glittering impresario and the world-famous artists of his entourage (who would desert him even as he brought them to the attention of the world) but the patient, faithful figure of the Papa Grigoriev.

In *Preparation for Ballet*, Nicolaeva-Legat writes simply, clearly and exclusively for dancers and dance-teachers; and at least one critic has drawn some instruction from her practical observations. The method she expounds is the traditional Russian technique, as taught at the Maryinsky and by her husband, the distinguished teacher at ballerino and ballerina level, Nicholas Legat. There are, in addition, notes on Yoga on which the present writer is not competent to comment.

And lastly Fernau Hall, in *An Anatomy of Ballet*, supplies a commentary from the seventh century to the day before yesterday.

CARYL BRAHMS

## Stage Wardrobe

DRESSING THE PLAY, by *Norah Lambourne*. Studio. 15s.

This book delighted me because it has the genuine craftsman's approach to the subject, and designing for the theatre is an absorbing and highly skilful craft. In saying this I do not for a moment belittle the designer's function. Fine craftsmanship is a proud thing and without it no artist will succeed in the theatre.

*Dressing the Play* is an honest book and much thought and specialised knowledge have gone to its making. Always essentials come first: the quality of the play, the selective use of research, the basic silhouette of different periods, the conditions under which the designs will be seen. Miss Lambourne has no truck with short cuts and superficial tricks. Surely and skilfully she gets down to brass tacks. Whether the problem she is discussing is the choice and handling of materials, methods of making costume accessories, or the compiling of a wardrobe of adaptable garments, she brings to it an artist's imagination and a knowledgeable and inventive commonsense. It is the combination of these qualities which should make her book of great value to all students of costume design. Her interest in the study of historical costume, her sense of style and understanding of character, will help to raise their standard of taste and discrimination, and they will be enormously stimulated by her capacity (becoming rarer in a mechanised and commercial world) for finding satisfaction in the actual doing of a piece of work and in the variety of materials and diversity of tools and processes.

Sensitive drawings, well chosen photographs, fine type and clear arrangement make this a delightful volume and I recommend *Dressing the Play* to any individual designer or theatre group who want to do good work, and do it with integrity.

MOLLY MCARTHUR



## Aspects of Shakespeare

SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE 1951-53. Reinhardt. 18s.

SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYGOING 1890-1952, by Gordon Crosse. Mowbray. 12s. 6d.

TITUS ANDRONICUS, edited by J. C. Maxwell. Methuen. 18s.

THE COMPOSITION OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS, by Albert Feuillerat. Cumberlege. 32s. 6d.

EVERYMAN'S DICTIONARY OF SHAKESPEARE QUOTATIONS, compiled by D. C. Browning. Dent. 15s.

SHAKESPEARE'S "MEASURE FOR MEASURE" by Mary Lascelles. Athlone Press. 15s.

THE SHAKESPEAREAN MOMENT, by Patrick Cruttwell. Chatto & Windus. 18s.

The Shakespeare Memorial Theatre's recent coming of age happily coincides with its achievement of artistic maturity. Ivor Brown concludes his temperately critical introduction to a photo album of the last three seasons with the claim, which is a just one, that the Avonside theatre now holds its own with the playhouses on the Thames. The quality of these Stratford souvenirs is improved by the inclusion of adverse criticism in a permanent record of more or less official character, a certain sign of strength. Angus McBean's photographs are as striking as ever, but still concentrate on the players with only shadowy and incidental glimpses of settings that deserve to be remembered too. Would it not be possible to include in the next volume a colour supplement, showing the stage as seen from the dress circle at moments that illustrate the use of the settings in key scenes?

There is seldom any record of what the audience, rather than professional critics, think of a Shakespearean production. Gordon Crosse's amiable recollections, based on notes made at the time, cover the whole period from Irving and Tree to the end of 1952, including the successive stages at Stratford as well as the London theatres. There are fascinating and tantalizing glimpses of stage business and production methods

that we recognise as having met elsewhere, a reminder of those theatrical traditions that form a most important part of our dramatic heritage but of which, even now, there is apparently no attempt to keep any substantial or systematic record. It took Mr. Crosse nearly thirty-four years to see on the stage all the thirty-seven plays of the Shakespearean canon, and he completed his score in 1923 with Robert Atkins's production of *Titus Andronicus* at the Old Vic, where Michael Benthall now promises us all the plays within the next five years.

*Titus Andronicus* is the only play in the First Folio that has never been seen at Stratford. Neglect of this early and gory melodrama has sometimes been excused on the plea of the play's dubious parentage. The latest opinion on that much-debated subject, in the new Arden edition by J. C. Maxwell, is that "the play is through and through Shakespearean in its planning, though there are strong indications that another hand, that of Peele, was responsible for the writing of Act I." The late Professor Albert Feuillerat, in what was planned as the first volume of a trilogy, contends that in *Titus* Shakespeare was rewriting an old play that had already been revised by someone else. By the same imposing arguments from versification and style Feuillerat demonstrates that Parts 2 and 3 of *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet* and even *Richard II* (dated back to 1591-2) are also re-hashes. The upshot is that an anonymous trio styled A, B and C, those odd-job men of our arithmetic lessons, did, among other pieces of work, the groundwork for these six plays. The verdict on this argument must be referred to textual scholars, but it is unlikely to be favourable.

The modern equivalent to rejecting as non-Shakespearean any lines you don't like is to make your own anthology and by indexing it pass off the result as a quotations dictionary. D. C. Browning groups all his quotations

from each play together in the textual order and prefaces them with a plot summary. The passages chosen run up as high as 1,700 lines for *Hamlet* which, we must more precisely say in future, is half-full of quotations. What good is half a play to anyone, more particularly when it is in snippets? In an age of cheap single-volume Shakespeares—to say nothing of the three-volume Everyman edition—what readers want is a reasonably full equivalent of the concordances that scholars use.

Miss Mary Lascelles anticipates a stern demand for "some explanation of the devotion of a whole book to a single play"—but why? There is a real need—and this is extraordinary when the size of the pyramid of Shakespearean commentary is considered—for a substantial modern book on each play. In the case of this study of *Measure for Measure*, readers are well rewarded by the unostentatious erudition and delicate critical perception of the author. It is arguable, perhaps, that Miss Lascelles is too punctilious in so far as she limits inference to notions derived from the pre-history of the play and the tune of the times. It is not impossible that Shakespeare may have intended to introduce Christian allegory into *Measure for Measure* even if a sober brow might not approve his theology and the general tendency of the stage at that time was in the opposite direction.

What exactly was happening to the spirit of the age, and how that affected the poets, is the subject of Patrick Cruttwell's enquiry in *The Shakespearean Moment*. He starts with a brilliant demonstration that "the sonnets are a sort of embryo, in which the essential evolution of the whole of Shakespeare is carried out in miniature" and then goes on to argue that this transition (from mediaeval and classical simplicities to a complexity and realism of which the natural expression was dramatic) was also the pattern of the crucial years at the turn of the century, which is traced in the poems of Donne as well as in the plays of Shakespeare.

I would advise readers of DRAMA not to miss *The Shakespearean Moment*, the most illuminating and readable book of the kind since Basil Willey's *Seventeenth Century Background*.

ROY WALKER

## Biographical

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, by Ralph Hancock and Letitia Fairbanks. Peter Davies. 15s.

PRINCE OF PLAYERS: EDWIN BOOTH, by Eleanor Ruggles. Peter Davies. 15s.

CECILE SOREL: *An Autobiography*. Staples. 12s. 6d.

KATE TERRY GIELGUD: *An Autobiography*. Reinhardt. 21s.

ALEC GUINNESS, by Kenneth Tynan. Rockliffe. 12s. 6d.

CICELY, by Cicely Courtneidge. Hutchinson. 15s.

Theatrical autobiographies and biographies come in all sorts and sizes. They are an acquired taste: how far the taste is worth acquiring depends on what kind of thing you want to know about the subject of the book. For instance, the portrait contrived by Douglas Fairbanks's niece, Letitia, and Ralph Hancock, is typical of the new-style gossip-biography that has become very popular of late, especially in America; zippy, smart-ish writing and a jazzed-up narrative packed with anecdotes. Here, the vividness is all, and the sub-title, "The Fourth Musketeer," gives a fair indication of the treatment. And Fairbanks's gay, extravagant career is just the right subject, with ample opportunity for amusing descriptions of Hollywood in the twenties.

The biography of Edwin Booth is in the same vein, but Booth happened to be a great and serious actor, and his career hardly gains from Mrs. Ruggles's attempt to write it in the manner of a novel; it was dramatic enough, without being dramatised. However, she has packed in an enormous number of facts, and her book is extremely entertaining and informative; one is irritated merely because without the hectic over-writing it would have been so much better.

For self-revelation in a more old-

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**JONATHAN CAPE**

**J. GARNET MILLER LTD.** have moved to premises in town at **54 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1** (Telephone: TATe Gallery 1781). Book Sales and the issue of Performing Licences are dealt with at this office; books may be inspected there. Please do not send to Quality Press Ltd. or to Frederick Muller Ltd. for our plays as these firms no longer handle them (except that **THE BOY WITH A CART** remains on the publication list of Frederick Muller Ltd.; amateur performing fees for this play are collected by J. Garnet Miller Ltd.).

We have recently taken over the following title:—

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fashioned style there are the books by Cécile Sorel and Mrs. Gielgud. The former is very much to my own taste: Mlle Sorel was for long one of the glories of the *Comédie française*, and this is not so much a book as a long, breathless, artless-artful soliloquy, full of gossip from the wings and pretended confidences and theatrical thoughts and reflections. If it were more self-conscious, it would not have come off, or indeed if it were less so; but Mlle Sorel pitches her voice on exactly the right note, and the result is enchanting. There is much mention, incidentally, of an actress of whom nothing like enough has been written in English: Réjane.

Sir John Gielgud's mother has written a nice, slow, quiet, old-fashioned autobiography on a well-established pattern: parents and origins, childhood, adolescence, marriage and so on. It is all pleasant and restrained and saved by the authoress's own high share of the legendary Terry charm, and by the way in which she quickens to enthusiasm when it comes to memories of the Lyceum in its great days; not for the first time, Irving becomes the most real figure in somebody else's memoirs.

In a different style again is the short, superbly illustrated study of Alec Guinness, which combines biographical notes with critical assessment of this most Protean of modern actors. The author was the Player King in the famous Guinness *Hamlet*, about which he is most informative and illuminating; indeed, the whole study displays Mr. Tynan's wit and wonderful descriptive gift.

Lastly, a straightforward autobiography of a sort rarer nowadays than it was before the war; not surprisingly, for English musical comedy is not what it was, and neither are its stars. But Cicely Courtneidge is one of the stage's indestructibles, and she tells her story just as one would expect: what more do her admirers want?

PETER FORSTER

## Theatrecraft

ACTING, by Edwin C. White. PLAY PRODUCTION, by Conrad Carter. STAGE-CRAFT, by A. J. Bradbury and W. R. B. Howard. STAGE MAKE-UP, by Horace Sequeira. Herbert Jenkins. 5s. each. PLAYWRITING, by Norman Holland. Foyles. 2s. 6d.

THE CRITIC IN THE THEATRE, by Harold Downs. Pitman. 12s. 6d.

POETRY, PROSE AND PLAY SCENES (Ed. Harold Downs). Herbert Jenkins. 14s.

First the primers: hints and tips galore. Nothing else in fact. Imagination? The creative process? Don't trouble your head with such airy-fairy nonsense. Get your wood, your canvas, and your bag of nails and measure up the part as if it were a flat. Just like lots of the amateur acting to be seen, when the flats are the most substantial things on the stage. Still, if that's the way you like things, these little books are cheap, very well produced, authoritative, and include a foreword by a distinguished personality. Norman Holland's book is of the same kind, but if you like the kind it's excellent.

*The Critic in the Theatre* is a pleasantly discursive book. It meanders through a delightful countryside of Mr. Downs's experiences, reading and enthusiasms, and if at the end we don't know much more about dramatic criticism than we did before, we have at least listened to the confidences of a gracious and sometimes penetrating critic; which is perhaps even better.

The last book on my list is an Anthology for students of Speech and Drama. The net has been widely cast. Snippets from Tolstoy, Shakespeare and Coward lie alongside each other. As an anthology, as it is claimed, "of some of the best literature . . . which creative minds have produced," I've known better. "To assist students who wish to meet the requirements of the graded scheme of examinations of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama" . . . presumably it is cut to measure.

JOHN ALLEN

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**PITMAN**

## Long Plays

FIVE PLAYS, by **Kaj Munk**. *Allen & Unwin*. 16s.  
THE HOPEFUL TRAVELLERS, by **Gaston-Marie Martens**. *J. Gurnet Miller*. 5s. MERRY-GO-ROUND, by **Arthur Schnitzler**. *Weidenfeld & Nicolson*. 10s. 6d. GOLDEN RAIN, by **R. F. Delderfeld**. *French*. 4s. BARCHESTER TOWERS, adapted from **Anthony Trollope** by **John Draper**. *Margery Vosper*. 5s. THE WISE CHILDREN, by **Ivan Butler**. *Stacey*. 4s. MUGS AND MONEY, by **Joseph Tomelty**. *H. R. Carter*. 4s. 6d. UNCLE DAN, by **H. S. Gibson**. *Carter*. 4s. 6d. HAVE TWINS AND LIKE IT, by **Jonty Dewhurst**. *P. Jones Blakey*. 4s. A HORSE! A HORSE! by **L. du Gard Peach**. *French*. 4s. A NIGHTMARE FOR NUMBER TEN, by **James Warboys**. *Heinemann*. 5s. THE NINE DAYS, by **T. B. Morris**. *French*. 4s.

In too many plays published to-day purpose, theatrical values and even credibility are secondary considerations; it is therefore a rare pleasure to be able to welcome a stout volume by a man to whom purpose was everything.

Kaj Munk's position in Scandinavia is with Ibsen and Strindberg; he is a classic. Elsewhere we know him only as a Resistance hero, though the story of his theatrical career was told by the translator of this present volume in *DRAMA*, Summer 1949. Apart from a minor broadcast, none of his works seem ever to have been played or published in English. The greater welcome then to this pioneer effort. The play that, by reason of its subject, is most likely to attract is *Cant*, a story of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. The other titles, *Herod the King*, *The Word*, *He Sits at the Melting-Pot* and the one-act *Before Cannae* are all strong theatre, outlining Munk's passion for "the grand drama," and are told in freely flowing dialogue most admirably translated.

It is good also to be able to welcome the overdue publication of Lady Iris Capell's translation of the André Obey adaptation of the Flemish *Les Gueux au Paradis*. As *The Hopeful Travellers* this charming comedy, though extremely difficult to produce convincingly, has had several English performances and may now look forward to many more.

The author of *Merry-Go-Round* long since withdrew permission for its performance. This translation of *Reigen*, Schnitzler's fifty-seven-year-old series of erotic dialogues, is offered by its publishers as a first English translation. This is far from being the case; there have been several semi-private translations and at least one, by Keene Wallis (recently reprinted in one of Eric Bentley's anthologies) that seems far truer in spirit than this newest version.

Of the remaining plays at least three deserve serious consideration. Standing well above the rest is *Golden Rain* (4 m., 4 w., 1 b.), a gentle comedy of character about the early weeks of marriage between a high-minded rector and his bright young wife. *Barchester*

*Towers* (8 m., 4 w.) makes a pleasant and efficient adaptation from a massive novel, and *The Wise Children* (4 m., 5 w.), the winner of a recent play-writing competition, deserves its distinction, though surely it is too long. It concerns the reactions of two teenage children to a long absent and errant father.

Of the two Irish plays, *Mugs and Money* (6 m., 3 w.), formerly titled *Barnum was Right*, is a Belfast comedy about an unpleasant family and its struggles with drink and money, and a beauty contest, while *Uncle Dan* (4 m., 5 w.) is a friendly, only vaguely Irish, old-fashioned comedy that tells of the triumph of the good-hearted ne'er-do-well over the machinations of Jacob Meenan who wickedly flourishes the mortgage over the heads of a widow and her brood.

*Have Twins and Like It* (6 m., 4 w.), described as a farce, involves a stolen fake necklace, a promise of wealth, and female impersonations. *A Horse! A Horse!* (3 m., 2 w.), also a farce, mixes impoverished gentry with a talking horse. *A Nightmare for Number Ten* (11 m., 5 w.) goes to the limits of comic strip, with village policemen, spies (clean-shaven and bearded, domestic and foreign) and a tribe of latter-day suffragettes. At a furious pace it might possibly hold the stage. *The Nine Days* (5 m., 6 w.) is the story of a girl, crippled as a child by the action of a drunken father, who is returned to strength by a miracle; the resultant upheaval becomes a subject for stock comedy. One of its author's least happy efforts.

S. D. L.

## Shorter Notices

Collections of plays recently issued include *The Would-Be Gentleman*, *That Scoundrel Scapin*, *The Miser*, *Love's Best Doctor* and *Don Juan* by Molière (Penguin, 2s. 6d.); *The Seagull* and *Other Plays* (*Uncle Vanya*, *The Bear*, *The Proposal* and *A Jubilee*) by Chekov (Penguin, 2s.); *The Winslow Boy*, *French Without Tears* and *Flare Path*, by Terence Rattigan (Pan, 2s.).

Heinemann's, in association with Allen & Unwin, have published *Cyrano de Bergerac*, by Edmond Rostand, trans. Brian Hooker (6s.). From Evans Plays comes *Murder Mistaken* (5s.), by Janet Green, 4 f., 2 m., and from Samuel French *Wild Horses* (in which Ralph Lynn and Robertson Hare appeared recently), 4 f., 9 m., and *The Young Elizabeth*, by Jennette Dowling and Francis Letton, 6 f., 16 m.

## Handbooks

The Strand Electric & Engineering Co. have published two excellent booklets.

The first, Percy Corry's *Planning the Small Stage* (free from 29 King Street, London, W.C.2), is clearly written, well illustrated, and full of sound advice about such problems as raking the auditorium floor, constructing a portable apron stage and suspending stage draperies—it even touches on fire precautions

and safety curtains. The book deals briefly with stage lighting equipment, and simple diagrams illustrate the best positions for both front of house and back stage apparatus. Advice on lighting for open stage and arena productions is given.

*Further Advice on Stage Lighting* (2s. 6d.) deals much more thoroughly with the problem of lighting a play. It is fully illustrated, deals sensibly and imaginatively with the producer's approach to lighting, and contains expert information about the use of colour and colour mixing. The construction and use of all types of equipment and fixings is explained in detail and there are chapters on optical effects, ultra-violet or "black" light and pyrotechnics.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

Sir,

It is not necessary to believe in the literal reality of a character impersonated by the actor to achieve a true theatrical experience, as Mr. Forster's letter in the last issue of *DRAMA* suggests, but it is necessary to identify yourself with the character he creates. Only when you begin to react objectively (how he suffers!) and subjectively (that could be me!) is the actor able to lead you through a crescendo of pity and fear to catharsis, which is the aim of theatre art, as it is of all art.

The actor can give you whatever is needed to obtain your reaction, for he entirely depends upon it. If you are solid and perhaps a little slow by modern standards then you may need to see a solid reality before you can identify yourself with the character. In this case you will be given real rabbits browsing in a very nearly real forest which will presently change to a Norman castle and thence to an eighteenth century ballroom, and a proscenium arch will be built to hide the machinery which changes the complicated sets. But if you are quick and imaginative you may be more stimulated by the suggestion of three steps and a pillar.

The awkward sightlines of the proscenium arch require that theatres shall be deep and high and having "ponged" his line across the actor must wait for its reaction to travel back to him, so there is a considerable loss of speed. (The Old Vic played *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* six minutes faster on an open stage at Edinburgh than on the modified stage in London.) There is also loss of precision and energy, and there can be no doubt that "projection" means a coarsening of the actor's technique. Shaw used to tell a story about Garrick who, when asked why he did not shorten his forestage at Drury Lane in the contemporary fashion, replied that were he ten feet further from his audience there would be no difference between him and any of his rivals.

On an open stage there is no need for the actor to project to "get" his audience; their interest flows naturally to the stage. We give our productions in a theatre where no spectator sits more than 25 feet from the stage so that every thought and half-thought can be apprehended. (It surprises most of our young actors, newcomers to the open stage, to find how much they must refine and discipline their technique.) With the right play the audience becomes absorbed and identifies itself intellectually and emotionally with the action, so that the limits of the stage are not the edges of the acting area but the walls surrounding the auditorium. This I believe allows the greatest possible sympathy between actors and audience.

As a last word may I caution Mr. Forster against judging the open stage by the light of

isolated productions? There are good and bad productions on the open stage as elsewhere, with the difference that while almost everything is known about the characteristics of the proscenium arch there is still much to discover about the open stage.

ANN JELICOE

The Cockpit Theatre Club.  
London, S.W.1.

Sir,

Mr. Ronald Duncan's plea for ambidextrous playwrights is very interesting but it was scarcely necessary for him to emphasise the absurdity of trying to collect good dialogue from amorous couples in the park or from dinner table chit-chat. Anybody who is "thinking of writing a play" should know sufficient about plays to enable him to realise that the playwright who offered the advice was either leg-pulling or suggesting a method of studying modern conversational technique. Even "realistic" dialogue must not be real, and when Mr. Duncan later says: "It is the function of the theatre not merely to express what a character would say in a given situation but what he might say were he granted a poet's power of articulation," he is stating what would be an obvious truth if he substituted "playwright" for "poet".

And surely it matters little whether a dramatist decides to adopt poetry or prose as a medium. It is equally easy to write bad dialogue in either. Some dramatists have written prose of a quality comparable with the finest poetry and much modern poetry is indistinguishable from prose to most of us.

It is quite untrue to say that the modern theatre is confined to being as superficial as human beings must appear to be, or that this is so because the modern convention assumes a fourth wall. It is equally untrue to say that the audience are no more than "gaping eavesdroppers" as a result. An audience can share great emotional experiences with great actors playing in great plays whether there is a fourth wall or only a rear one. And to suggest that a neo-Elizabethan Shakespeare would be dismembered, is the sort of nonsense which ignores the fact that Shakespeare was a genius who would do to-day what he did when he wrote his plays; he would use the technique of his day and fashion it to suit his purpose. Our contemporary theatre, despite the popularity of mediocrity, would find a place for him; posterity might then glorify our age and conventions, as so many things Elizabethan are now glorified.

We must not be deluded, however. We shall not discover another Shakespeare merely by knocking down the walls of the stage or by trying to remove imaginary obstacles from the path of the dramatist-poets. Genius must be the master, not the servant of technique.

P. CORRY

Manchester.



## REPERTORY ENTERPRISE

Some of the plays given their first production during the fourth quarter of 1953, compiled from material made available by Spotlight Casting Directory.

**BRISTOL Old Vic. *Old Bailey*, by T. C. Worsley.**

4 f., 8 m. *Old Bailey*, the head of a business, prides himself on the high quality of his merchandise and there is conflict when his sons wish to introduce cheap lines and modern methods.

**BROMLEY. *Feather on the Water*, by Mary Hayley**

Bell. 5 f., 2 m. A fantasy of a man's dreams.

***Nun's Veiling*, by Ben Travers. 5 f., 8 m.**

A romantic comedy of royalty and revolution.

***Tea For Three*, by J. Locher and Colin Mackenzie. 2 f., 2 m. (first performance in this country). The loves of a young**

Frenchman.

**CROYDON Repertory Players. *The Wise Children*, by Ivan Butler. 5 f., 4 m. Mrs. Langdon**

plans to marry again but her long-lost husband returns and she has to decide

whether or not to go back to him for the sake of the children.

**GAINSBOROUGH King's Theatre. *Dilemma*, by Archel McCaw. 4 f., 4 m. A thriller, with**

light relief, concerning the dilemma of a C.I.D. inspector when he discovers that

the murderer he is looking for is his friend,

Paul Osborne, who has killed a blackmailer

to save the name of his wife and daughter.

**MORECAMBE Repertory Theatre. *The Voice of the Charmer*, by Mabel and Denis Constanduros. 6 f., 5 m. Domestic comedy. One set. Family has cottage to let in their grounds. Subterfuges of would-be tenants to gain possession.**

**NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE Playhouse. *Lovers' Meeting*, by Christopher Bond. 4 f., 6 m.**

Comedy. Set in a Cambridge tutorial establishment.

**NORTHAMPTON Repertory Theatre. *The Food of Love*, by Christopher Bond. 3 f., 6 m.**

Study-living room of music master at public school.

**OLDHAM Repertory Theatre. *Take Away the Lady*, by Gavin Holt and Gerrard Glaister.**

2 f., 5 m. Johnny Fellowes' flat in London.

**RICHMOND Theatre. *Elizabeth's Star*, by Alex Munroe. 4 f., 4 m. Baronet refuses to allow**

his daughter to marry until son gives up unsuitable engagement.

**WATFORD Theatre Co. *Ordeal by Fire*, by Ivan Butler. 3 f., 4 m.**

**WOOLWICH R.A. Productions. *Trouble Brewing*, by John H. Watson. Farce. 3 f., 5 m. Wife**

arranges to sell husband's secret formula, which many people wish to possess.

**WORTHING Theatre Co. *The Green Man*, by Frank Launder and Sydney Gilliat. 5 f., 8 m. Concerning a body that comes to life,**

a plot to dispose of a diplomat, and the bickering of an engaged couple.

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**THE WHITE CARNATION.** A play in two acts by R. C. Sherriff. 10 males, 6 females. One exterior and one interior scene.

**WILD HORSES.** A farcial comedy in three acts by Ben Travers. 9 males, 4 females. On interior scene.

The four undermentioned plays are now available for amateur production.

**THE WHITE SHEEP OF THE FAMILY.** A felonious comedy in three acts by L. du Garde Peach and Ian Hay. 5 males, 4 females. One interior scene. Price 5s. 3d.

**A HORSE! A HORSE!** A comedy in three acts by L. du Garde Peach. 3 males, 2 females. One interior scene. Price 4s. 3d.

**THE GIFT.** A play in two acts by Mary Lumsden. 2 males, 4 females. One interior scene. Price 5s. 3d.

**GOLDEN RAIN.** A comedy in three acts by R. F. Delderfield. 5 males, 4 females. One interior scene. Price 4s. 3d.

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# MEMBERS' PAGES



The Director of the British Drama League gives news of the activities of the League and its Members

## The Increased Subscription

AT the New Year the subscription to the League was raised to two guineas. The League, with its tradition of economy, has always endeavoured to keep its subscription as low as possible; this increase has only been made, therefore, long after comparable institutions have raised their fees.

Members who use the Library will still get this highly specialised service at a lower figure than that charged by any ordinary privately-owned lending library, and in addition there are many other privileges and concessions available to them.

Apart from the use of the facilities offered, every member strengthens the League in its efforts to attain the ideals for which it was founded in 1919, and for which it continually strives.

These ideals are: To assist the development of the art of the theatre and to promote a right relation between drama and the life of the community.

## Theatre Week 1954

Members will already have received a circular giving them preliminary notice of this event, which will take place at Malvern, September 3rd to 11th.

## Advance of the Theatregoers

When the Theatregoers' Club was started last October no one foresaw how great the response would be. By the end of the year Club membership totalled over 325, and support, both moral and practical, is promised from the Theatrical Managers' Association and the Society of West End Theatre Managers. Branches are being considered in Newcastle, Manchester, and Liverpool.

At the Club's New Year party at the Criterion Restaurant, after a visit to *The Sleeping Prince*, 200 of the theatregoers

were joined by leading stage personalities including Paul Scofield, Dame Sybil Thorndike, Sir Lewis Casson, Athene Seyler, Nicholas Hannen, Renée Asherson and Sam Wanamaker, all of whom mingled freely with the members. A last-minute engagement prevented Sir Laurence and Lady Olivier from being present. The next excursions were to *A Question of Fact* and *The Big Knife*; *A Day by the Sea* will be visited in March, and at least three more plays will be seen before the season closes.

All interested in joining the Club should write to Edmund Cooper at B.D.L. Headquarters as soon as possible.

## Evan John

The sudden death of Evan John just after Christmas was a serious blow to the British Drama League, of which he had been a valued member for more than ten years. He was a devoted lover of the theatre and had been an actor, stage manager and playwright of distinction, though perhaps to the general public he will best be remembered as a writer of historical novels.

Since 1949 Evan John had been one of the Directors of the League's Playwriting Course. No one who read his comments on the students' work could fail to be deeply impressed by his detailed attention to each. He gave generously from the fullness of his experience.

He also took part in several B.D.L. Theatre Weeks and Training Courses, and those who were fortunate enough to hear him will not soon forget his lively and inspiring lectures. It will indeed be difficult to find anyone to take his place.

F.B.

## A Scottish Amateur

We also regret to report the death, on October 16th last, of George Humphrey, of Newtongrange, Midlothian. Heart and soul he had worked in the most practical

# ENGLISH THEATRE GUILD

*Plays available for amateur production include:—*

- HARVEY**, by Mary Chase. Comedy. 6 m., 5/3  
6 f., 2 sets.
- MANY HAPPY RETURNS**. Comedy by Roland Pertwee and Noel Streetfield. 7 f., 5 m., 1 set. 5/3
- THE BIGGEST THIEF IN TOWN**. Comedy by Dalton Trumbo. 2 f., 7 m., 1 set. 5/3
- INTENT TO MURDER**. Thriller by Leslie Sands. 3 m., 3 f., 1 set. 5/3
- SLEEPING PARTNERSHIP**. Comedy by Kenneth Horne. 4 m., 3 f., 1 set. 5/3
- A LADY MISLAID**. Comedy by Kenneth Horne. 3 m., 4 f., 1 set. 5/3
- QUEEN ELIZABETH SLEPT HERE**. Farcical comedy. 6 f., 7 m., 1 set. 5/3
- THE PARAGON**. Drama by Roland and Michael Pertwee. 5 m., 4 f., 1 set. 5/3
- LADIES IN RETIREMENT**. Thriller by Edward Percy and Reginald Denham. 1 m., 6 f., 1 set. 5/3
- THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER**. Comedy by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman. 16 m., 9 f., 1 set. 5/3
- LOVE IN ALBANIA**. Comedy by Eric Linklater. 2 f., 3 m., 1 set. 4/3
- STAFF DANCE**. Comedy by Robert Morley. 5 f., 4 m., 1 set. 4/3
- TO DREAM AGAIN**. Romantic Comedy by Veronica Haigh. 5 m., 2 f., 1 set. 4/3
- BLACK CHIFFON**. Drama by Lesley Storm. 3 m., 4 f., 1 set. 5/3
- ADAM'S APPLE**. By N. C. Hunter (author of "Waters of the Moon"). Comedy. 8 m., 3 f., 1 set. 5/3
- AND THIS WAS ODD**. (Originally entitled "Wasn't it Odd?") Comedy by Kenneth Horne. 3 m., 6 f., 1 set. 5/3
- LAURA**. Mystery thriller by Vera Caspary and George Sklar. 3 f., 5 m., 1 set. 5/3
- TWO DOZEN RED ROSES**. Comedy. Adapted from the Italian by Kenneth Horne. 2 f., 3 m., 1 set. 4/3
- THE THIRD VISITOR**. Comedy-thriller by Gerald Anstruther. 2 f., 6 m., 2 sets. 4/3
- TO KILL A CAT**. Fast-moving Comedy-Drama by Roland Pertwee and Harold Dearden. 4 f., 6 m., 1 set. 4/3
- ARSENIC AND OLD LACE**. Comedy by Joseph Kesselring. 3 f., 11 m., 1 set. 5/3
- PINK STRING AND SEALING WAX**. By Roland Pertwee. 4 m., 5 f., 1 set. 5/3
- THE SHOP AT SLY CORNER**. Thriller by Edward Percy. 4 f., 6 m., 1 set. 5/3
- BOLD LOVER**. Comedy by Nicholas Phipps. 3 m., 5 f., 1 set. 4/3
- MISSING BELIEVED MARRIED**. Farcical Comedy by Colin Morris (author of "Reluctant Heroes"). 5 m., 5 f., 1 set. 4/3
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SADIE R. AITKEN

## Gibraltar's Tenth Festival

Although this Annual Drama Festival is Army sponsored and run by the Educational Corps, it is not restricted to Service entrants. In 1953, after a lapse, the schools took part again; in fact the final evening was enhanced by the gusto with which the boys from the Gibraltar Grammar School performed *A Glimpse of Reality*. The enthusiasm of these youngsters, excelled in some ways by the zest of their opposite numbers from the Loreto High School, augurs well for the future of civilian drama in Gibraltar.

There is no doubt that the Drama Festival arouses tremendous enthusiasms and satisfies a genuine need. Because of this, and because it brings together civilian and service groups, the event is important and the festival spirit must always be maintained.

Potential acting talent in the Festival was more abundant than production experience,

and this is where help is most required. On the other hand, it would be difficult to imagine a more enchanting production of Rattigan's *Harlequinade* than that achieved by Hugo Tobias for the Gunners: it was swift, bustling, colourful and good to look at. Amateurs rarely get away with a "back-stage" atmosphere, but the Gibraltar Gunners certainly did.

ROBERT G. NEWTON

## Swan-Upping Down Under

Michael Langham's article on *Australian Theatre* (DRAMA, Autumn 1953) was much appreciated over here but we found the illustrations curious. We knew Mr. Langham had worked in Western Australia, with headquarters at Perth on the Swan River, whereas Swan Hill of the photographs is a little township on the Upper Murray in the State of Victoria 1,400 miles from Perth. Swan Hill may have taken its appellation from the native bird, black but comely, and possibly the founders of its Shakespearean Festival felt that the place-name added appropriateness to their annual week in honour of the Swan of Avon.

Stratford-on-Avon as recipient of food parcels, and when the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Company visited us last year some of them made an excursion up-country from Sydney bearing a message of thanks from the Mayor. Mr. Burbridge, the representative of the British Council in Australia, and himself a Governor of the Memorial Theatre, had the happy thought of celebrating Shakespeare's Birthday on April 23rd by a gathering round his statue in front of the Sydney Public Library. Anthony Quayle, just arrived from New Zealand, headed a procession to lay flowers on the monument and then adjourned to the Library, which possesses a First Folio, to drink to the Immortal Memory in Sherris Sack bottled for the occasion by an Australian vigneron.

Yet another little township on the New South Wales side of the Murray, Deniliquin, has a Dramatic Club that is doing its best to make its community Shakespeare-conscious. When Mr. Burbridge gave a talk entitled *Shakespeare and Drama in General*

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**Wilfred Massey**  
9, Westfield Road, Beaconsfield. (Bucks)

at Echuca, 40 miles away, Club members crossed the river to hear him on a night of rain and gale. The Club organised a visit by the forty-two children in the town taking secondary school courses to Melbourne (200 miles away) to see the Stratford Players in *As You Like It*.

Australians cherish their links with the homeland, and are proud of the cultural heritage they share. There are bound to be differences; our scale of distance is hard for English folk to realise; our north is climatically your south; we get the Autumn Number of DRAMA in Spring; the swans we see floating on the water are black with red beaks instead of white with yellow, though fundamentally the same sort of bird! Our practitioners of the arts, like yours, may begin as ugly ducklings or turn out to be geese; but we have swans of our own to be taken up and marked. In ballet, a dramatic art for which Australians show aptitude, an earlier generation saw Pavlova's *Dying Swan*; *Swan Lake*, first presented by the Russian Ballet during the war years, has been repeated in unabridged performances by local dancers; and finally, in 1951 when the Australian Commonwealth celebrated its Jubilee, our Borovansky Ballet produced the world premiere of *The Black Swan*.

E. M. TILDESLEY

## Town and Gown

The Alchemist Players of Oxford draw their members from the major dramatic societies in the City and County of Oxford for an annual production. Their first play, *The Alchemist*, was produced by Professor Robert Levens, of Merton College, during Oxford's Festival of Britain fortnight. Subsequent productions were *The Skin of Our Teeth* in 1952 and *Love for Love* in 1953.

Audiences at *Love for Love* were large and appreciative, although their reaction varied with each performance. Among them, as we played in term time, were many undergraduates who relished Congreve's superb language and were quick to voice their appreciation of his wit. Usually the opening scenes between Valentine, Jeremy and Scandal were played to a hushed house that was somewhat bewildered

by the play, but the audience began to warm up by the time Tattle (played by the Dramatic Critic of the *Oxford Times*) came upon the scene. Later there was no doubt that, despite the shock administered to some people's sense of propriety, the play had won the audience's heart.

The Alchemist Players have fulfilled two of their aims: to present plays of merit and to give talented amateur actors the opportunity of appearing in a style of production to which they are unused.

ELIZABETH HOWLAND

## A Hertfordshire Group

The Bancroft Players of Hitchin, in their production of *The Holly and the Ivy* last November, succeeded in presenting the theme of the play clearly to the audience; they also showed a sensitive understanding of the characters. The less experienced members of the cast were lucky to have in Mr. Philip Burton a producer who gave them every possible help and skilfully concealed their weaknesses.

The parts of Mick (B. Bowker) and Richard (R. Hardy) were played with delightful humour and both attacked with admirable firmness—a quality rather lacking in the Rev. Martin Gregory (R. Trail). Margaret (J. Daintree) played the first act out of key but then settled down to give a moving and exciting performance. The other characters (some rather oddly cast) were played with sincerity though not always consistently.

An excellently designed and painted set, made under great difficulties, deserves special mention.

LYN OXENFORD

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# Young People and the Theatre

## Christmas Holiday Lectures

**E**NCOURAGED by the success of the first series of lectures for young people, the League decided to organise a second series in the Christmas holidays of 1953-54, and this time to hold them in a theatre. The Managements of Wyndhams, the Westminster and the Old Vic generously lent their theatres and the first talk was given on December 28th by Richard Burton on "Shakespeare's Welshmen." Claire Bloom was also on the stage and took part in the discussion. Mr. Burton treated this subject, about which little has been written or said, with charm and much native wit. He showed the genius of Shakespeare in interpreting the different characteristics of Northern and Southern Welsh and maintained that he even understood the structure of the language. This he proved by many amusing quotations from the speeches of Fluellen and other Welsh characters.

After the lecture the questions came so rapidly that when the Chairman, John Maude, inquired whether some of the audience would like to come on the stage and talk to the speakers personally or use the last remaining minutes for questions, there was a unanimous preference for continuing the discussion. The last question of all was whether they preferred acting happy parts or sad ones. "Oh, sad ones," said Mr. Burton, and "Sad ones," echoed Miss Bloom, and the audience was sent happily away.

The second lecture, on "The Fabulous World of Stage Scenery and Lighting," was given by George Devine. He showed how to create an impression of distance by the use of light and shadow, to raise and lower a curtain correctly and to use ultra-violet light and blend light. The children saw how whole walls, shelves and cupboards rise into the flies and how doors and archways alter the illusion of distance.

Athene Seyler was the chief speaker in the third lecture. Nicholas Hannen who accompanied her gave a perfect performance of a cross-talk act. Miss Seyler described

the enormous changes the theatre had undergone in the last forty years and spoke with nostalgia of the days when theatres were all gilt cupids and plush and solid rows of people in evening dress. But she told the children that they were lucky to be living in an age when the theatre was full of life and spirit and hope, and when the general standard of acting in this country was acknowledged by the world to be supreme.

The final lecture was given at the Old Vic by Sybil Thorndike and Lewis Casson on "What Acting Does for You." Dame Sybil showed all the vigour and radiance of the early years when she appeared as a young actress on the boards of the Old Vic, and as usual her audience were enthralled. Sir Lewis Casson spoke about the importance of clear speech. They both emphasised the tremendous value of the theatre in stirring the imagination, thus enabling the actor to use creative imagination in everyday affairs.

At the end of each lecture questions from the children came thick and fast. They ranged from "Do you mind people eating chocolates in the audience?" to "What do you mean by the search for truth?"

The young people were a little older this year, the average age being about fifteen, though several were under twelve, and the younger ones seemed the most eager to join in the discussions. The lack of shyness and self-consciousness is a remarkable feature of the present-day child and one could not help being struck by the intelligence of most of the questions.

The League owes a great debt of gratitude to the distinguished men and women of the theatre who so readily gave their time and took so much trouble in providing such a brilliant series of talks. These were experiences for the children to remember all their lives, and their interest and enthusiasm promises well for the playgoers of the future.

We were lucky, too, in having distinguished and entertaining chairmen to preside at the lectures. These were Mr. Laurence Irving, Lord Bessborough, and



A YOUNG ACTORS' CLASS in the Practice Theatre at 9 Fitzroy Square. Norah Lambourne shows how to make masks and jewellery. Fox Photograph.

the League's Chairman, Mr. John Maude, who presided at the first and last lectures.

There is already a demand from many children and their parents for a third series of lectures in the next Christmas holidays and there is no doubt that this very successful activity, inspired in the first instance by Mrs. Geoffrey Whitworth, will find a permanent place in the League's programme.

FRANCES BRIGGS

## Training Young People

The Training Department is rapidly developing its work for children and young people. On January 2nd, at the Conference of Educational Associations, Frances Mackenzie and Lyn Oxenford demonstrated methods of dramatic training for children with groups of girls from the Chiswick County High School and boys from Archbishop Tenison's Grammar School. John Wood, a student at our 1952 Full-time Course, showed the work of boys of the Leo Secondary Modern School.

During the Christmas holidays four Acting Classes for children were held at Headquarters. About 120 children attended the classes, which took place on the mornings of the Children's Christmas Holiday Theatre Lectures. They were given lunch and afterwards escorted to the Lectures by the staff tutors. A similar Course is projected for the Easter holidays.

The Ministry of Education has invited the Training Department to organise an International Exhibition of Youth Drama in connection with the Brussels Treaty Organisation. Norah Lambourne will be mainly responsible for the planning of the Exhibition in co-operation with the Ministry. The L.C.C. have offered rooms in County Hall for the Exhibition (November 6th to 13th) which will include contributions from the Benelux countries. We hope that many of the exhibits (photographs, models, designs and so forth) illustrating aspects of dramatic work in schools and youth organisations, will be the work of the young people themselves.

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### THE LAST VICTORY

Period. Anne and Arthur Russell. (4m., 5w.)

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Comedy. Catherine Pryane. (3m., 4w.)

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## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

held at 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1, on Wednesday, December 9, 1953, at 5 p.m. The Viscount Esher, M.B.E. (President), in the chair and thirty members present.

### A. Extraordinary General Meeting

Proposed by Mr. Leo Baker, seconded by Mrs. Forrest, carried unanimously, and

**Resolved:** That the following alterations be made to the Articles of Association:

- (a) By deleting Article 48 and substituting therefor the following new Article:—

48. The Chairman of the Council shall be entitled to preside at all meetings of the Council and in the absence of the Chairman the Deputy Chairman shall be entitled to preside. The Chairman of a Committee shall be entitled to preside at all meetings of the Committee. If five minutes after the time appointed for holding the meeting the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Council or the Chairman of a Committee as the case may be is not present or if present should not be willing to preside, the members of the Council or Committee as the case may be being present shall choose one of their number to be Chairman of the Meeting.

- (b) By deleting Article 58 and substituting therefor the following new Article:—

58. At its first meeting every newly elected Council shall elect a President and Vice-Presidents who shall hold office for a term of two years and be eligible for re-election. At the same meeting the Council shall elect from amongst its members a Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Council and an Honorary Treasurer who shall all hold office for a term of two years and be eligible for re-election. Any casual vacancy in any of the said offices may be filled by the Council but the person elected shall hold office only for the remainder of the term for which his predecessor was elected.

### B. Annual General Meeting

1. *Minutes of the last meeting*, which had been circulated in the Spring 1953 issue of *DRAMA*, were taken as read and signed.

2. *Annual Report*. Mr. E. Martin Browne, moving the adoption, hoped that members would regard the past year's work not only as useful in itself but as having prepared the ground for future expansion. He spoke of the renewal of the Professional Theatre's interest in the League through the Children's Lectures and the Theatre-goers' Club, both of which had bright prospects: of the plans for Theatre Weeks, at Malvern in 1954 and at Southlands, Wimbledon, in 1955 (the latter would be a joint gathering of the League and the

Standing Conference, together with the Training Department's Summer School at which special terms for young people would be offered). The London Festival Week-end for the National Final at Whitsuntide, and Provincial Conferences, would bring members of affiliated societies together. All these activities were being carried out by existing personnel. He reminded members that they had a devoted staff at headquarters who were skilled people, working for smaller salaries than they could command elsewhere; they freely gave extra hours in time of need because they had the interests of the League at heart. There was no pension scheme and as, because of the low salaries, the younger members changed frequently, heads of departments had the additional burden of constantly training new staff.

Mr. Martin Browne proposed, Mr. Patrick Campbell seconded, and it was unanimously

**Resolved:** That the Annual Report should be adopted.

3. *Balance Sheet*. In the absence of the Treasurer, Mr. Martin Browne gave details of income and expenditure. The working loss of £673 was more than last year's deficit owing to the general rise in costs; this trend could not be arrested by economy alone. He moved, Mr. Kenneth Rae seconded, and it was unanimously

**Resolved:** That the Accounts and Balance Sheet should be adopted.

4. Mr. John Maude, Q.C., Chairman of the Council, proposed, Mr. Charles Trott, Hon. Treasurer, seconded, and it was

**Resolved** (with one dissentient): That the annual subscription for individual members and affiliated organisations be raised from £1 11s. 6d. to £2 2s. as from January 1st, 1954.

Mr. Maude said the proposal to increase the subscription was the unanimous recommendation of both Council and Executive. He had called for working reports from all departments and acquainted himself and the Council thoroughly with the League's

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situation. He found present premises were too small, both for the Library and for the staff, many of whom worked under deplorable conditions. The roof had long been faulty and £700 had been spent on putting it right; dry rot in one floor had cost an additional £650. It would be necessary to take in more of No. 10 Fitzroy Square next year for the Library, which must necessarily go on growing.

Mr. Trott said he had to hold the balance between getting in just enough income to provide what was necessary, and fixing a subscription which the smaller member-societies could afford. He did not feel they could raise the subscription beyond £2 2s. This figure would, after allowing for a certain inevitable proportion of resignations, provide an increase of £2,000 in a full year, which would be sufficient (once the structural repairs to the premises had been completed and paid for) to wipe out the deficit and provide for urgent needs. Two guineas was really a cheap price to-day for even the Library and DRAMA alone, not counting the many other services.

Mr. Patrick Canipbell, Chairman, West Riding District, thought that the subscription should be raised to a figure high enough to subsidise work in the provinces. There was a crying need for more and better producers: this meant regional training, which his district wanted to undertake intensively.

Mr. Emmet suggested that the Council and the areas should explore the possibility of a regional fund. Mr. Maude welcomed Mr. Campbell's plea, and he and Mr. Trott assured him that this idea had been discussed already and would be examined further. Mr. Robin Whitworth said he favoured the smallest possible basic subscription, plus higher charges for services, and agreed that provincial needs must stand high in priority. Mr. Trott said provincial centres could not be assisted out of the £2 2s. subscription at present, but hoped this would be possible later. Mr. Hollway said the Council had agreed that staff pensions must have priority on any increase.

Replying to the point raised by Mr. Campbell, Mr. Martin Browne said that

more than half of the members of the Council were connected with the amateur theatre (most of them in the provinces) and would therefore be sympathetic to Mr. Campbell's request.

5. *Auditors.* The Hon. Treasurer proposed, Mr. Maude seconded and it was *Resolved:* That Messrs. D. M. Vaughan and Co. be re-elected auditors for the year 1953-54.

The meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to Lord Esher for taking the Chair. This was carried by acclamation.

## Play Award

The winner of the 1952-53 Charles Henry Foyle Play Award was Gerard McLarnon with his play *Unhallowed* which was written in 1948 and received an Arts Council Award in Scotland. The play was first produced in October, 1952, at the Perth Repertory Theatre.

Professor Allardyce Nicoll will be the judge for the 1953-54 Award and entries should be submitted by June 30th, 1954, to the Clerk to the Trust at Dale Road, Bournbrook, Birmingham 29.

## Wembley Festival, 1954

An ambitious programme has been devised for this year's Music and Drama Festival which commences on April 3rd. In the Drama Section the preliminary rounds are to be adjudicated by John Bourne; Jack Carlton, M.B.E., will judge the finals. This year Challenge Cups are offered in each section, with Certificates for the second and third places. Details from the Entertainments Manager, Town Hall, Wembley.

## A Sussex Competition

Brighton Corporation and the Sussex Playwrights' Club are jointly promoting, in connection with the Centenary of the Borough in 1954, a competition for a play about Brighton—period or modern, fact or fiction. A prize of £25 is offered and the winning play will be given a public reading. Closing date, April 30th, 1954. Details from the Hon. Secretary, Sussex Playwrights' Club, 9 Wilbury Crescent, Hove 4.



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